

STUDY OF OVERSEAS EMPLOYEES
WHO RETURN SHORT OF TOUR

During 1966

Prepared by
OFFICE OF PERSONNEL

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RETURN SHORT OF TOUR STUDY

1. Purpose of Study: To survey the extent of the problem of employees returning short of tour from overseas including number, reasons, areas, etc.; and to develop revisions, as necessary, in Agency policies and procedures which could result in a reduction in the number of early returnees.

2. Scope of Study: The case of each employee who returned short of tour during calendar year 1966 was analyzed on the basis of the following: career service, grade, date of arrival and departure from the overseas station and reasons for the return short of tour. The bulk of the data in the study was provided by the various career services.

Findings

During each of the past three years, 16% of the Agency's staff employees did not complete their overseas tours. An analysis of those employees who returned short of tour during calendar year 1966 reveals the following:

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1. Of the [REDACTED] employees who returned PCS from overseas assignments, [REDACTED] did not complete their tours. The returns short of tour for each of the Career Services amounted to five and one-half percent of their returnees except that for the "D" Service, it ran about 27%. The number of early returnees from the various major geographical areas of the world were about in proportion to the total number of employees assigned to those areas. (TAB A)

2. The average number of months served by short of tour returnees was 14.7 months (TAB B). Seven percent of these returnees had served more than 23 months, while 31.5% had served five or less months. The "D" Career Service early returnees served 15.6 months as compared to the 9.2 months served by those in the "SC" Career Service.

3. In most cases the reason for the return of employees short of tour was determined to be for the convenience of the Government. Twenty-six percent of the group were brought back from overseas early to meet priority requirements in other locations, eight percent for other operational reasons and 15% were because of family reasons. (TAB C)

4. All grade levels, GS-5 through GS-18, had some early returnees. More than one-half of all employees who returned short of tour were in grades GS-11 and above. (TAB D)

Conclusions

1. Normally, the Agency authorizes short of tour returns at Government expense. Those individuals who were required to pay some of the return travel costs were usually clerical employees. (TAB E)
2. There appears to be rather widespread feeling on the part of some employees and supervisory personnel that the Agency should not hold an individual financially responsible when he breaches his signed travel agreement. (TAB E)
3. The overall short of tour practices in the "D" Career Service generally are less strict than in the other Career Services. (TAB F)
4. Present Agency policy may not in every instance encourage or even permit firm decisions on short of tour problems. (TAB G)
5. The decision as to who will pay return travel costs is sometimes deferred until after the employee returns from overseas. (TAB H)
6. Negative information on employees and/or dependents is not always available or used during the screening process of prospective overseas assignees. TAB I)

Recommendations

1. The Agency should follow an unwritten policy that the short of tour employee will not be held liable for any travel and transportation costs. However, unless the reason for return is fully acceptable to the Head of the Career Service, the employee would no longer be in good standing within his Career Service.

2. Agency regulations should be amended so that the decision concerning requests for return short of tour would be made by the Head of the Career Service having jurisdiction over the employee, with the Director of Personnel monitoring the program. (TAB G)

3. All Heads of Career Services should:

- a. Endeavor wherever possible to make more careful long-range plans for staffing overseas positions.
- b. Endeavor to develop a stricter discipline throughout the Service and hold all participants in the short of tour decision-making process responsible for their actions and/or recommendations.
- c. Screen employees and their dependents more carefully by making full use of information available both inside and outside the Career Service. (TAB I)

TAB A

A. SHORT TOUR RETURNEES BY CAREER SERVICES AND MAJOR GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

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Of the [REDACTED] staff employees who returned PCS from overseas assignments during calendar year 1966, approximately 83% of the [REDACTED] employees who returned short of tour were from the "D" Career Service, with the remainder (17%) from the other Career Services. Those returning short of tour were generally distributed among the major geographical areas of the world in proportion to the total number of employees assigned to those areas. However, a slightly higher proportion of early returnees from the Near East was offset by a lower proportion from the Far East.

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The following table shows the distribution of short of tour returnees by Career Services and by major geographical areas of the world:

	TOTAL	Career Service				
		D	SC	S*	IM	R
Africa	[REDACTED]					
Europe						
Near East						
Far East						
Western Hemisphere						
TOTAL						

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* Excludes SC Career Service

TAB B

B. LENGTH OF SHORT TOURS SERVED

Forty-two percent of the "D" Career Service short of tour returnees had served overseas more than 18 months and seven percent had served at least 23 months. The "SC" employees who did not complete their overseas tours returned much sooner than was the case with the "D" Career Service. For example, all "SC" early returnees served a maximum of 18 months with the average short tour being 9.2 months. Fifty-two percent of the "D" personnel served 18 months or less with an average short tour of 15.6 months.

In the last minute rush of out processing for an overseas assignment, the major portion of employees sign a two-year tour agreement. This agreement may or may not always agree with the verbal understanding had with Career Service officials. The verbal understanding in many instances is for a longer length tour and in some instances may be for a tour of perhaps less than two years. In the latter cases, individuals who return from overseas in less than twenty-four months do not consider their return to be short of tour.

The following table shows the number of employees by Career Service who served various lengths of short tours:

Months Served	Total	D	SC	S*	IM	R
23						
22						
21						
20						
19						
18						
17						
16						
11 - 15						
6 - 10						
1 - 5						
TOTAL						
AV. NO. MOS. SERVED	14.7	15.6	9.2	12.3	21	15.3

C

C. REASONS FOR RETURN SHORT OF TOUR

The Agency has followed the general practice of authorizing short of tour returns for the convenience of the Government. During all of 1966, 25X9A2 only six out of the [REDACTED] short of tour returnees paid some of their return travel expenses.

Thirty-one percent of the early returnees from the "D" Career Service was for the purpose of meeting priority assignments in other locations. A considerable number of this group were for assignment to Vietnam; nine percent of the "D" Service short tours were terminated due to other operational reasons.

The following summary table enumerates, by reason and by Career Service, the number of employees who returned short of tour:

Reasons for Early Return	Career Services							
	Total	D	SC	SF	SL	ST	IM	R
1. Priority Reassignment Requirement	[REDACTED]							
2. Operational Reasons								
3. Discontinued Work Requirements								
4. Medical								
5. Resignation, Retirement, Death								
6. Home Leave and New Tour								
7. Inefficiency/Employee Conduct								
8. Dissatisfaction with Job/Surroundings								
9. Personal Reasons: Family, Marital, School								
10. Marriage to American								
11. Marriage to Alien								
12. Pregnant								
TOTAL								

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D

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Number of Agency Overseas Employees
Returned Short of Tour During 1966
Listed by Grade Level and Reasons for Return

Reason	Total	18-17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
<u>D - CAREER SERVICE</u> Priority Reassignment Requirement Operational Reasons Discontinued Work Requirement Medical Resignation, Retirement, Death Home Leave and New Tour Inefficiency/Employee Conduct Dissatisfaction With Job/Surroundings Personal Reasons: Family, Marital, School Marriage to American Marriage to Alien Pregnant TOTAL														
<u>SC - CAREER SERVICE</u> Medical Inefficiency/Employee Conduct Personal Reasons: Family, Marital, School Marriage to Alien TOTAL														
<u>S - CAREER SERVICE (ST, SL, SF)*</u> Operational Reasons Inefficiency/Employee Conduct Personal Reasons: Family, Marital, School TOTAL														

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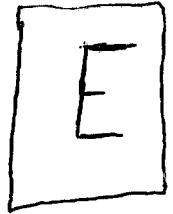
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Number of Agency Overseas Employees
Returned Short of Tour During 1966
Listed by Grade Level and Reasons for Return

Reason	Total	18-17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
<u>I - CAREER SERVICE</u> (IM)* 25X9A2														
Personal Reasons: Family, Marital, School														
<u>R - CAREER SERVICE</u>														
Medical														
Inefficiency/Employee Conduct														
Dissatisfaction with Job/Surroundings														
TOTAL														
GRAND TOTAL														

* Career Services not listed had no short of tour returnees.

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E. WHO PAYS THE SHORT OF TOUR TRAVEL COSTS?

Regardless of any differences of opinion as to whether the employee should ever be expected to pay some or all of his travel costs when he breaches his travel agreement, the Agency in actual practice rarely requires employees to do so. Out of the [REDACTED] employees who returned short of tour during 1966, only six, all from the "D" Service, paid some of the costs; none paid all of the costs.

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The consensus of those offices and Career Services having some responsibility for dealing with the short of tour problem is that we must tighten our policies and procedures so as to reduce the number of returns short of tour, particularly in those instances where the reasons are not clearly for the convenience of the Agency.

There is considerable difference of opinion as to how a drastic reduction in the number of short of tour cases could be accomplished. For example, there seems to be a rather widespread feeling that, when necessary, individuals should be authorized to return short of tour at Government expense regardless of the reasons involved. This attitude is based primarily on the belief that the employee holds the upper hand and that the Agency is largely helpless to other than authorize his return when he demands it.

The Office of Communications takes the position that an overseas employee who strongly desires to return home short of tour, for whatever reason, should be brought back at Government expense. They believe that such an employee is a liability to the station and to require him to remain against his will would in the long run create more problems and cost more than to bring him home. The determination as to an individual's continued employment and/or future standing in his Career Service would be based on the reasons involved in his early return.

Although the consensus appears to be that individuals who return short of tour for other than strictly official reasons should be required to pay their travel and transportation costs in accordance with the terms of their signed travel agreements (copy attached). It is quite obvious, however, that the majority of such employees are not in a position financially to pay their travel and transportation costs or to reimburse the Government for such expenditures. For example, a Communicator, GS-7, assigned to the [REDACTED] Station, who has a wife and two small children probably would not be able to pay the return travel costs for his family, much less the costs for shipment of household effects and privately owned vehicle all of which would amount to perhaps several thousand dollars.

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The position of the Clandestine Services generally is that employees who return short of tour for personal convenience should be expected to pay their return costs. However, there appears to be something less than complete uniformity of thinking among the many and widely scattered officials concerned with the various aspects of this matter as to exactly the difference between personal and official convenience. This has led to some confusion, misunderstandings, hard feelings and practices which range from the very strict to the very lenient. Under present Agency policy, it is the responsibility of the Director of Personnel to determine whether or not a service agreement has been breached and, if so, the employee is expected to pay the travel costs.



F. THE "D" SERVICE HAS THE HIGHEST SHORT TOUR RATE

The returns short of tour for each of the Career Services amounted to five and one-half percent of their total returnees except that for the "D" Service it ran about 27%. It might be interesting to consider some of the reasons why the rate of early returnees from the "D" Service is five and a half times greater than for any of the other Career Services. The "D" Service had a larger number of priority requirements to fill during 1966 than is normally the case. Thirty-one percent of their early returnees were to meet priority requirements; nine percent were for a variety of operational reasons and six percent were due to diminished or discontinued work requirements. Therefore, 46% of the "D" employees who returned short of tour did so because of various operational reasons. Thirty percent returned early for the same reasons as did all the "SC" early returnees. Twenty-four percent of the "D" group returned early for reasons other than operational or for reasons which applied to the "SC" group.

If the "D" Career Service had conformed to the five and one-half percent short of tour practice typical of the other Career Services, it would have had only [REDACTED] early returnees instead of [REDACTED]. When the total of [REDACTED] who were returned for various operational reasons is added to the figure of [REDACTED] the total of early returnees would have been [REDACTED] instead of the [REDACTED] who actually returned early. There is no intention to imply that [REDACTED] short of tour returnees for the "D" Service would be normal, ideal or even attainable. It does, however, seem reasonable to assume that the actual number of short of tour returnees, [REDACTED] may have been higher than perhaps necessary..

It must be remembered that the stresses, strains, limitations, and varying conditions under which many of the "D" personnel must operate

abroad may be considerably different from those which apply to other Agency employees stationed abroad. It, therefore, would seem reasonable to assume that the "D" Service would have a higher percentage of short of tour returnees because of the necessity for flexibility in conforming with rapidly changing requirements, situations, and operational climates.

The vast and farflung nature of the "D" Service, the lack of a strict discipline in some areas, the oft time difference of opinion among supervisors and station chiefs in some aspects of the field of personnel administration, the tendency of some supervisory personnel to fail to pass forward unfavorable information concerning an employee may, when coupled with a highly decentralized personnel planning and assignment mechanism, tend to create a favorable climate for something less than a uniform, tight, and hard nosed but fair decision making process for handling short of tour problems.

TAB

G. WHO AUTHORIZES RETURNS SHORT OF TOUR?

25X1A Headquarters Regulation [REDACTED] covers the service or travel agreement for assignment abroad. The last sentence of the paragraph reads as follows:

" The Director of Personnel, after consultation with the Operating Official concerned, shall determine whether the employee has breached his service agreement and, if so, shall immediately inform the Director of Finance."

By omission this would seem to indicate that the Director of Personnel is not required to get involved in the short of tour decision making process whenever an Operating Official determines that the return was for the convenience of the Government and there obviously was no breach of service agreement. [REDACTED] quoted above places responsibility on the Director of Personnel for determining if a service agreement has been breached. This places the Director of Personnel in the position of being the big bad wolf when he determines that the service agreement has been breached and he may be accused by some of being too soft when he determines that the service agreement has not been breached. Rarely would the Director of Personnel have any personal knowledge concerning the facts of a case other than what an Operating Official may have furnished him. It would appear that all too often the Director of Personnel is being asked to make a decision on a set of facts which may be incomplete or perhaps slanted toward the type of decision that the originating official in the field would like to see made.

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It would seem, therefore, that the authority for approving all returns short of tour is de facto a line responsibility. The Head of

the Career Service concerned possesses far greater details of any particular case than is true of the Director of Personnel. He likewise is in a much better position to estimate the possible impact of a given decision on the Career Service in general and the employee in particular. The Director of Personnel should monitor the short of tour program in order to ensure that equitable and uniform treatment is maintained throughout the Agency. Employees who are dissatisfied with the decision of the Head of Career Service on a short of tour matter should always have the opportunity of appeal to the Director of Personnel.



H. DEFERRED DECISIONS CONCERNING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

During 1966 there were several instances in which individuals were authorized to return from overseas assignments short of their tour agreements with no decision being made with regard to whether the Agency or the employee would pay the travel and transportation costs.

Upon return of the employees to headquarters, the Agency began negotiations in an attempt to get the employee to reimburse the Government for the travel and transportation costs. Usually this involved much unpleasantness as the employees were generally unable financially to make any reimbursement for travel and transportation. In only a few instances have they been able and/or willing to repay part of the costs. All cases involved the expenditure of much time and effort which resulted in hard feelings, lowered morale and perhaps new problems.

This delay in making a decision as to who must pay the costs has resulted in an unconscionable amount of official time being taken to resolve the matter after the fact. All of this could have been avoided had the decision been made prior to departure from the field as to who had financial responsibility for the travel costs.

H

I. IS ALL KNOWN INFORMATION BEING USED?

Some of the returnees short of tour were not first-time offenders. Some previously had been returned short of tour for similar reasons. This would seem to indicate that known information may not have come to light during the screening process which preceded overseas selection and processing. In some cases, supervisors, station chiefs, and/or operating officials may not have made sufficient effort to ensure that negative personnel information which might have a possible bearing on future overseas assignments was properly reported, verified, and recorded. Supervisors and other officials must be held strictly accountable when they, whether intentionally or unintentionally, withhold vital information which could raise doubts concerning the advisability of assigning a particular individual overseas.

Approximately 15% of the 1966 short of tour returnees had to return because of family reasons, primarily marital. This would seem to indicate that the Agency must give some greater measure of attention to the screening of family members in addition to careful screening of employees prior to approval for overseas assignments.

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